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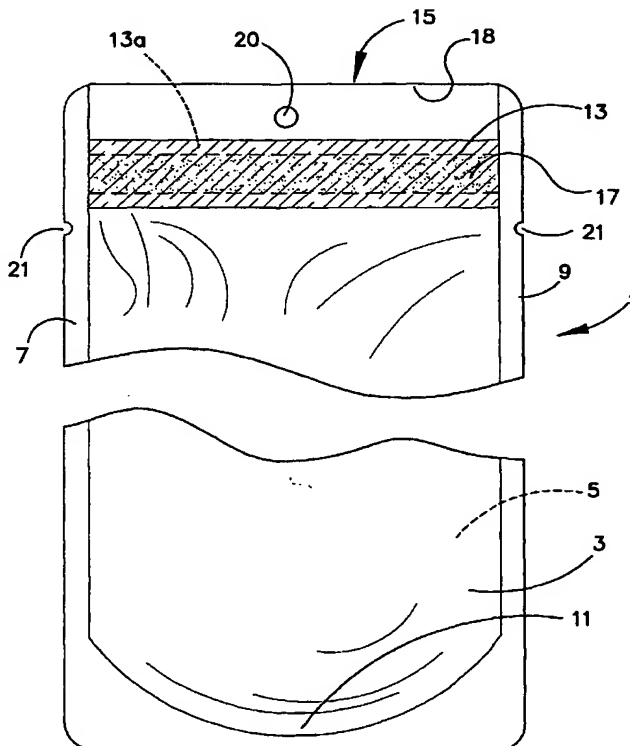
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(54) Title: FLEXIBLE POUCH, FILLING AND HEAT SEALING LINE FOR FLEXIBLE POUCHES, AND CONTAINERS FOR
SUPPORTING AND MOVING THE FLEXIBLE POUCHES

(57) Abstract: A flexible pouch is provided which has panels (3, 5). A transparent strip (13) is provided on one of the panels and a translucent filter (13a) on the other. The panels are heat sealed together to close the pouch and the integrity of the heat seal is determined by shining ultraviolet light through the clear strip and inspecting the translucent filter (13a) so that imperfections in the seal can be identified. Pouches are packaged into containers (25) which include slots (50) and the full containers are stacked for transport through the plant for further processing in a retort, cooler or the like. This enables a large number of pouches to be easily transported through the plant for further processing after they have been filled and heat sealed. The heat sealing line may include a vision system, or the vision system may be a stand-alone item for inspecting the seal to determine the integrity of the seal. The vision system includes a UV light source for directing UV light through the transparent strip and a camera for inspecting the translucent filter (13a) to obtain an image of the filter (13a). The image is processed to identify dark regions which enable the integrity of the seal to be determined.

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